

HARLAN C. BENNETT



This month's "In Focus" guest could easily have become a professional ice skating star, or a lawyer, instead of 2nd Vice President, Systems Development, at Cal-Western Life.

Harl's grandparents came to Northern California from Nova Scotia in a covered wagon. Harl was born in Redding. He has one older brother, and his father owned a heavy duty trucking garage. The family moved to North Sacramento when Harl was a youngster.

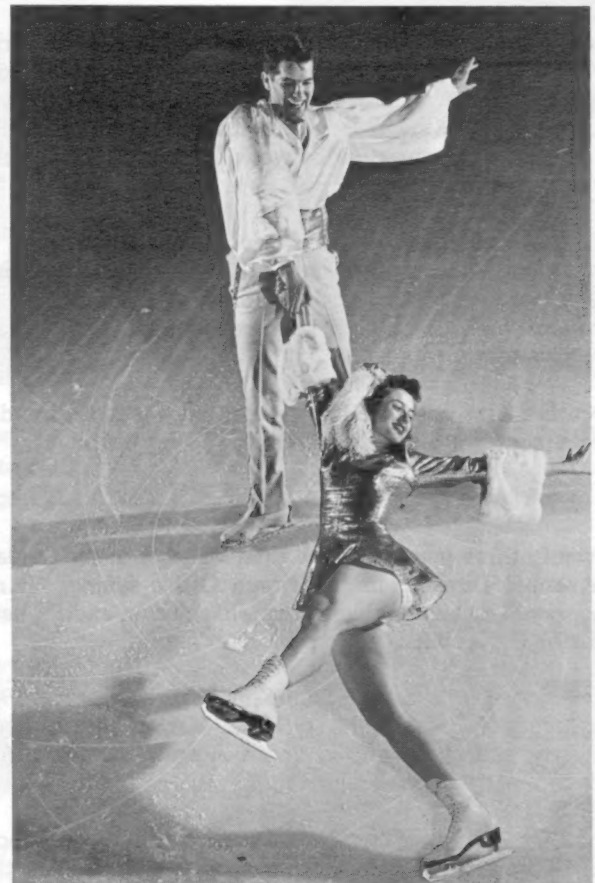
At age 14 a very important event took place. An ice skating rink opened one block from his house, and the curious Harl decided to give it a try. One time led to two, and he was hooked. Little did he know skating would play a big part in his life for the next twenty years! Even though much of Harl's time was spent skating, he was a member of the Grant Union High School Swimming Team where his specialty was the 220 yard freestyle.

After graduation Harl decided to delay college in favor of earning some money. He worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles for a short time, then for his father. After work he headed for the ice rink.

One night Harl's skating instructor had a long talk with Mr. Bennett. They decided Harl would go to Berkeley, which was a large figure skating center. Harl enrolled at the University of California. His plan was to major in Economics, then enter law school. He attended classes,

joined a fraternity, and skated from 5:30 PM to 11 PM during the week and from 6 AM to 1:30 PM on Sundays. Harl had his own key to the rink in order to get as much private practice as he could manage before the public was admitted.

Finally the day arrived when he decided he was ready for competition. He was 19 when he entered the California State Novice Championship. That day the fates were not kind to him. Harl finished 13th out of 13! So maybe he needed more practice!! It was two years before he entered his next competition. This time he placed Second, then First in the Pacific Coast Novice. From 1945 to 1948 Harl entered and usually won First Place in different contests. Nor was it just by himself. He had three different partners. One each for Dance, Pairs, and Fours. This was a busy young man!



In February of 1947 Harl was involved in a head-on automobile accident. He was knocked unconscious; and when he came to, it was to hear the Highway Patrolman telling his friend that Harl was dead! Fortunately, the corpse only had a broken leg, internal injuries, and numerous cuts and scratches! In mid-May the leg cast finally came off. Fourteen days later our champ was skating in a show. All was not well, however; the leg was

weak. Harl competed only one more time before shelving his dreams of the Olympics.

He decided to concentrate on his classes full-time, although he did take the qualifying test to become an ice skating judge. Concentration paid off, and he finished college in three years! In his last year he was elected to the Senior Hall of Fame.

Harl came back to Sacramento for the summer before tackling law school. A friend of the family who was an attorney, sent Harl to Cal-Western Life to talk to one of the Company lawyers. This gentleman also happened to be the Dean of McGeorge School of Law. Surprisingly enough, he talked the aspiring barrister out of law and into coming to work for Cal-Western. On July 13, 1949, Harl began as a Senior Clerk in Group Field Service. The department has now split into various Group departments.

Over the years he was promoted to Group Underwriter; Manager, Group Underwriting; and Group Secretary (in which position he supervised the operations of the Group Clerical, Group Policy Payment, and Group Underwriting Departments).

1963 was another momentous year for Harl. As he wrote in the 1968 January issue of the Cal-Westerner, "It didn't seem like much of a job in July, 1963, when the Group Department decided to look at the entire system for the administration of Group Life and Health Insurance.

"Now, nearly four and a half years later, the end is in sight — conversion to CFG (Consolidated Functions-Group) has started." Started, mind you. The end is just barely visible . . . even to the most far-sighted of men!

Harl sunk his teeth into the fledgling project, and the hard work paid off. In 1965 he was elected 2nd Vice President, Group Administration. An executive in the Company made this remark about Harl: "His forte is managing and organizing. It doesn't matter whether Harl knows anything about the product — he can step in and have the whole ball of wax running smoothly in an amazingly short period of time."

What happened to the ice skating during his Cal-Western years? In 1950 he was elected President of the local skating club. There were no judges in Sacramento, so Harl started a judges school and trained his students diligently. He also directed and designed the costumes for the first Sacramento ice show put on by the club. Then he convinced the Directors of the club to sponsor the only Northern California Championships held here. In 1960 Harl retired from skating. He felt it was too much work and not enough enjoyment.

After skating, Harl bowled and skied, but work was taking up more of his time and these hobbies fell by the wayside. He bought a house in Roseville in 1960 and he turned it into a showplace. He proudly states he has 100 rose bushes and put in 300 bulbs year before last. The artistic executive's latest home improvement was to

antique his garage door! It's probably the only one in Roseville . . . maybe even Sacramento!

Harl travels so much on business that he likes to stay home as often as possible. He has a poodle dog named "Terri" and a mongrel cat with the distinguished name of "Cat." He loves to drive. Every once in a while he gets in his car and goes to Yuma or Oregon for breakfast, then heads back home again in time to water the flowers!

Skater, judge, organizer, gardener, and painter — Harlan C. Bennett is a man of many talents!



Harlan C. Bennett
2nd V.P. Systems Development

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